

A Splendid Suggestion

Seattle, Wash., Aug. 11, 1919.

Hon. Homer S. Cummings,
Chairman Democratic National Committee.

My very dear Mr. Cummings:

Am very sorry that I am so late in sending you the plan of campaign that I promised you when you were in Seattle. Which is for the triple purpose of arousing intense interest, raising money for the campaign and inspiring confidence in the democratic party and its management by giving the voters an opportunity to HELP CONTROL the policies of the party both before and after the election.

IN GENERAL OUTLINE IS AS FOLLOWS:

Instead of following the usual convention method of appointing platform and other committees, select the planks of the platform, dictate the policies of the party and select the candidates of the party, UNAIDED AND ALONE; allow the voters a chance to HELP SELECT the various principles, policies and candidates of the party by means of a sort of initiative and referendum campaign started as soon as possible so that the results can be counted and tabulated for the use of the public, and the state and national party conventions. To prevent confusion and enable your committee to work to the best advantage, it will be necessary to formulate some sort of questionnaire and send it to the people through advertisements in all the papers, especially the G. O. P. papers, to be cut out by the voters and returned to your committee as quickly as possible; address of the voter to go with the questionnaire.

VOTERS OF THE NATION GREETINGS:

Realizing the new conditions of the new world, the democratic party proposes to meet these NEW CONDITIONS by NEW METHODS of SELECTION of both the candidates and the policies and principles that will govern the actions of the party for the next four years. Therefore, we are presenting to the voters of the party, the following initiative questionnaire which you will please fill out, fill in with a dollar bill to help pay expenses of YOUR campaign, and return to the National Central Committee at Washington, D. C., as soon as possible; who will then count and tabulate and as soon as possible, refer to the voters all the most popular candidates, principles and policies, for further selection and elimination. All to the end that the National Platform Committee appointed by the democratic convention may know something of what the voters of the party want voiced in the platform and who the voters want for president and vice-president.

POSSIBLE FORM OF QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF THE RAILROADS;

AGAINST THE PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF THE RAILROADS;

FOR THE PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF THE TELEGRAPH;

AGAINST THE PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF THE TELEGRAPH.

Call for comments and space therefore.

Of course, you will submit in some such form EVERY POSSIBLE QUESTION OF POLICY OR PRINCIPLE INVOLVED IN THE CAMPAIGN, and every possible candidate whose consent to be thus presented to the voters that you can get.

Of course, as I have not stopped to consult with any one, you will have to consult and arrange with many DEMOCRATIC democrats before you will take action, no matter how promising or how much it appeals to you and other members of the committee. That is why I am sorry that I did not have it ready for you when you were here. But there is plenty of time if prompt action is taken now.

Your first thought on reading this will be, — why, that is just what I made the trip all over the country for, was to find out all about public opinion. And yet you know that you and all of us are worrying over the QUESTION OF QUESTIONS. — What are the fifteen million new women and four million soldier voters thinking politically? Worrying because we that are right among them all the time know nothing of what the majority will do election day. (Oh yes, we find lots of people that know all about it), but question them, and their cock-sure knowledge evaporates. And so as no one knows, and it is essential that we do know in advance of election

day so we can have a chance to satisfy them, it seems to me that the surest way to find out what they want is to ASK THEM DIRECT through this initiative and referendum method. And as many of them will not only answer the questionnaire but will ask questions, what a fine chance to send REAL ANSWERS to what THEY WANT TO KNOW, thus satisfying them as NOTHING ELSE COULD — and a satisfied voter will VOTE with US. The objection will be brought out, that republicans and others will answer the question, vote for or against, and thus confuse the issues and plans. But as names and addresses will be required, any wholesale attempt of that kind would soon reveal itself and the local democratic committees could correct them and all of it would stir up intense interest, which is one of the chief objects of the campaign. And besides, it is republicans and OTHERS that you need to reach and satisfy that the democratic party is the best for them, all things considered, — not that it is perfect or anywhere near perfection. (If I were running the campaign I would put in a special disclaimer of perfection). That it did not expect to settle for all time all of the issues of our work in THIS campaign, but that we were trying to do the best we could with what we had to do and deal with under the existing conditions; that we wanted all the HELP from the voters possible to the end that we might do the very best possible for all at THIS ELECTION.

To save your time, I suggest some of the possible effects of my scheme. The very novelty of one of the big parties doing such a thing (some of the little parties have done it for years) would advertise (catch that word advertise) and popularize the principles and candidates of the democratic party as no other method could. They simply could not suppress it or keep the idea out of their press, and the G. O. P. would have to follow suit or lose the election sure. And if they imitated us they would be so late about it that it would do them little good because of their self evident insincerity. Besides, the attempt to try would produce a bitter fight between their reactionaries and progressives, because such action would throw the control of the G. O. P. to the progressives; and as we all know, their junkers had rather wreck their party than lose control.

Again, I realize that the plutocratic minded men of the democratic party (and we have too many of them) will fight this proposition to the limit, because they, like the G. O. P. junkers, are determined to rule or ruin; hence, they want the old convention style with all its tricks, tricks and trades, that can be manipulated and controlled in their interest. Hence, also, I realize that it is some job that I am putting up to you and your cordial co-workers, without whose cooperation you would fail.

To the radical pessimist who will sneer, "That it is only advisory", ask them to imagine politicians rejecting an idea with a MAJORITY behind it or candidate either.

To the reactionary, ask them to tell you how to win WITHOUT some such program, for it would be impossible in these days of confusion and unrest when the people want their way so much.

Treasurer Jamison said that the voter that put up the dollars few, or many, would take such an interest in the campaign, as to almost insure success. What better plan can be devised to insure success than to combine the interest that the voter will naturally feel in the success of both his idea and his dollar.

Please remember that this plan gets the dollars, selects the candidates and principles, avoids contests and bitter fights in the convention, and above and beyond all, secures the good will of the people as a whole, which is absolutely necessary to success.

GEORGE N. HODGDON.

The governor of Nebraska declined to accept the advice of a large number of citizens, including a majority of the state house of representatives, to give the extra session that met late in July authority to pass legislation to put a crimp into profiteering. He insisted that there was insufficient authority under existing laws, and proposed to have investigations made. These have resulted in one prosecution and no lowering of prices. Along about next election time the governor of Nebraska will be wishing he had taken the advice of people interested in seeing prices reduced instead of politicians anxious to reap a little temporary glory.

FROM AN ADMIRER

Pine Bluffs, Wyo., Sept. 22nd, 1919.

W. J. Bryan, Lincoln, Nebr.

Dear Bill: Enclosed please find \$1.00 to renew my subscription to your Commoner. I acquired the habit of reading your paper when I lived back in Missouri, and you have been in politics long enough to know the loyalty of a Missouri democrat. I have been taking your paper ever since it started and it has become a necessity. In fact, it is about the only genuine democratic equipment we democrats have.

While writing you I trust you will not think it out of place for me to say in a confidential way that our party seems to be up against it, and you are again needed at the helm. Brother Wilson and the other administration leaders have gotten things in a devil of a shape. It may not do any good for me to urge you to again run for president, for that has got too old and common for you, but I can't see any other way out of it if we expect to save the country and the Grand Old Party; so I will do my duty as I see it by asking you to come to the rescue.

You remember when David quit his meanness, got good and wanted to do something wonderful to counteract his meanness, he asked Jehovah to let him build a great temple, but the Lord turned him down flat because he was a man of war. And the Lord said unto David: "Your son Solomon whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name." Solomon was given this great task because he was a man of peace and a man of wisdom. We as a nation and a party are facing a serious condition if not a great crisis; something remarkable must be done and it must be done with clean hands. Not only must our party be redeemed and restored to its sacred principles, but our military nation must be rebuilt so it will stand through the centuries as a great fabric of peace. We must find a Solomon for this work and you are the only one available.

Yes, Bill, all of this is why I want you to run. I will sum it up briefly in six reasons why you should come again: 1st, you are a stayer, — we all admire a stayer, and a stayer is needed now; 2nd, you are good at explaining, — it will take a whole lot of explaining this time to save the party; 3rd, any man that can endure defeat three times and continue a hold on the party, and then go into the next convention as you did at Baltimore and give the nomination to whoever he pleases, is big enough and strong enough to be president; a man with such personal and political magnetism is the only man for this hour of trying emergency; 4th, every reform that we have received for the last twenty years by either of the parties has been hatched, fed and nourished by you; 5th, you are yet the recognized leader and I might say the daddy of the democratic party. You made Woodrow president and you are in a measure responsible for his acts. He is a good man; I believe he is a man of peace and was sincere in trying to keep us out of war, but, poor man, he was not strong enough to withstand the awful pressure of the war-lords and the moneyed interest that wanted blood money; and then he mixed and mingled too much with the blue-bloods of Europe, which didn't seem to make him any stronger. Yes, Bill, it is up to you to correct the mistakes of your "political hopeful"; wherein he was weak you must be the strength; 6th, we have reached the point in the game when we are forced to call for a "pinch batter". You are the only one in the team that can knock the ball over the fence and make a home-run; so you must go to the bat or the game is lost.

There is no other way out of it Bill, and I trust that these few broken lines will encourage you to go forth to the great task. It is not only a question of being elected, that is not the big thing just now, but if you throw your great weight and remarkable ability into the fight you can at least again save the party from annihilation.

Please excuse me for speaking so plain and personal, but in a time like this I can't do otherwise. This may annoy you and you may criticize me for coming to you with my trouble; but I have been a life-long democrat and it hurts me to see the party butchered. I have to go to some one in my bereavement, and if I can't go to you I would like to know where in the devil could I go.

Yours truly,

AN EX-MISSOURI DEMOCRAT.